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C O N F I D E N T I A L AIT TAIPEI 000805

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GENEVA PASS DHOHMAN; BEIJING FOR SELIGSOHN

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TAGS: TBIO PREL WHO CH TW

SUBJECT: TAIWAN APPEALS FOR FLEXIBILITY ON WHO INITIATIVE

REF: A. TAIPEI 0783
1B. STATE 46031
1C. TAIPEI 0719

Classified By: Acting Director Robert S. Wang for reasons 1.4 B/D

1. (C) SUMMARY. Responding to AIT's demarche on April 9 (Taipei 783), Foreign Minister James Huang told AIT Acting Director on April 10 that Taiwan still intends to apply for WHO membership in the name of "Taiwan" this week but will adopt a "flexible" approach in consultations with its friends in the run-up to the WHA meeting in May. Huang said he knows that this effort will fail and that Taiwan's goal is still to gain observer status and meaningful participation in WHO. He reiterated Taiwan's deep frustration with the lack of progress in its ten-year effort to gain observership status at the WHA. He also stressed that Taiwan had not intended to "surprise" the U.S., explaining the final decision was made only on April 4. ADIR responded that he would relay the message to Washington but also repeated that the application for membership could jeopardize Taiwan's chances to achieve observership and meaningful participation in WHO. END SUMMARY

12. (C) At FM Huang's request, Acting AIT Director Robert Wang met with him at MOFA on April 10 to discuss the U.S. demarche that ADIR had relayed to Presidential Secretary General Chiou I-jen the previous day (ref A). Referring to the discussion between TECRO chief David Lee and DAS Tom Christensen over this issue, Huang acknowledged that Taiwan expects the PRC to react negatively. But Beijing, he said, invariably rejects every Taiwan initiative, even on domestic reform issues, and Taiwan cannot tie its policy to PRC reaction. Rather, Taiwan must pursue its own diplomatic and domestic reform objectives and hopes the USG will take a "creative" approach and not be limited by Beijing's expected reaction. ADIR responded that the U.S. government does pursue its own interests and foreign policy objectives, as demonstrated most recently in our decision to sell AMRAAM missiles to Taiwan over Beijing's vigorous protest.

13. (C) Noting David Lee's discussion with DAS Christensen, Huang stated that in making its decision to apply for full WHO membership, Taiwan had not intended to "surprise" the U.S. The membership decision, he explained, was not made until April 4, after which he immediately contacted AIT to ask for a meeting in order to inform us. Thus, repeating what Presidential Office SG Chiou said on April 9, Taiwan did

its best to provide advance notice. ADIR responded that we were nonetheless surprised by the decision at this stage in the run up to the WHA meeting.

¶14. (C) FM Huang explained that Taiwan was moved to take this step out of its deep frustration after ten years of trying to gain WHO observership and meaningful participation. Beijing has objected to virtually every Taiwan effort to participate in international organizations, claiming these were moves towards achieving independence. Taiwan is the 16th largest trading nation and the 19th largest economy in the world. If Taiwan did nothing to advance its diplomatic objectives at WHO, its domestic constituency, including many medical profession associations, would find it hard to accept. Huang urged the U.S. to take into consideration the wishes of the people of Taiwan.

¶15. (C) Huang told ADIR that applying for WHO membership would allow Taiwan to raise its voice and maximize its chances to achieve both observership and meaningful participation in WHO. He said he hoped Washington would understand the need for Taiwan to file the application and emphasized that Taiwan remains open to consult on this issue in the coming days. Even though Taiwan intends to apply for WHO membership later this week, on April 12 or 13, he reiterated it is prepared to be "flexible" and to continue discussions with the USG and others.

¶16. (C) FM Huang noted that the WHA would not convene in Geneva until mid-May when it would then address the issue of Taiwan's application. In the interim, he said, there would be about 30 days for discussions between Taiwan and its friends. Taiwan wants to continue to pursue observer status and meaningful participation in the WHO, he stressed, expressing appreciation for past U.S. support and urging a &more creative8 approach from the U.S. He also said Taiwan would be approaching Japan along those lines.

¶17. (C) ADIR told FM Huang he would convey Taiwan's message to Washington, but he cautioned that Washington had already made clear that if Taiwan went forth with the WHO application, there would be no reason to have consultations on the issue of observership. Hence, a Taiwan application for membership could negatively affect its effort to gain observer status and meaningful participation. Huang responded by stressing once again that both sides should continue discussing this issue in the coming days through TECRO and AIT/T. After the meeting, MOFA IO Chief David Lin separately told AIT that Taiwan's end goal remained obtaining observer status at the WHA.

¶18. (C) COMMENT. Taiwan's gambit appears intended to raise its profile at the WHA in order to break the long deadlock over its quest for observership. It intends to file an application for membership before the deadline to get the issue on the WHA agenda. Taiwan hopes this will initiate discussion on observer status and meaningful participation in the run-up to the WHA meeting, offering the possibility that it would withdraw its application or otherwise take the issue off the agenda before the WHA annual meeting begins. END COMMENT

WANG